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ABSTRACT

This paper presents four Italian educational theories and defines their basic doctrines with regard to society and their relationship to education. The first theory, called the laicist-liberal theory, merges the idealist tradition with the theory of liberalism in social development, while it stresses the importance of the individual and social growth nurtured by social culture. In this theory education fosters social culture through humanistic, scientific, and technical education. The socialist-marxist theory, the second theory, promotes the idea of man as an historical and social being, and its basic concepts include the ideas that: (1) values are derived from the progressive experience of man; (2) civic education aims at educating citizens to cooperate in communities; and (3) political education is an essential part of civic education. This theory calls for the removal of the authoritarian and bureaucratic structure of schools and for the establishment of the democratization of education. The principles behind the third theory, the Catholic theory, are that the human being has the highest value of all existing things and that the human being is essentially social and political. Civic education must be used to direct the social and political human being through democratic value clarification. The radical theory, the fourth theory, views pacificism and tolerance as essential values in starting social change. This theory stresses history instruction and advocates school intervention and participation in the community. (DJC)

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EDUCATION TO SOCIAL, CIVIC AND POLITICAL VALUES IN THE ITALIAN PEDAGOGICAL THOUGHT

by

Cesare Scurati

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Education to social, civic and political values in the Italian pedagogical thought

by Cesare Scurati *

Four main theories will be taken into account:

- the laicist-liberal
- the socialist-marxist
- the catholic
- the radical.

Each theory will be defined in its basic points with regard to its view of society, the relation between education and society and the specific matter of education to social, civic and political values.

1. The laicist-liberal theory

Major exponents: R. Mazzetti, L. Volpicelli, S. Valitutti, F. Ravaglioli

This theory merges the idealistic tradition with the theory of liberalism in social development and with some views derived from the perspective of the progressive education movement.

Its core is the importance of the individual and social growth nurtured by culture.

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* The contribution is based on the essays drawn up by G. Raiteri, N. Galli and L. Pati for the research 'Social, civic and political education in Italy from 1945 to 1985', Department of Education, Catholic University of Milan.

Individual and society

Three points of view are particularly relevant:

a - The political society, seen as a community organized by law, is an essential condition for the ethical and rational development of man since it allows to overcome self-centredness and will power. It is therefore necessary to avoid both authoritarian statism and individualism or particularism.

b - Sociality is based on the relation between individual and society, that is, on the human way of feeling the need to realize oneself and the others at the same time. The democratic ideal of life lies in establishing relations of solidarity, help and mutual support, thanks to which society itself gains new qualities.

c - Culture is the driving force of social life and the ground of spiritual life, it ensures the realization of a common mind, a collective way of understanding the problems of life and facing the needs of material life.

The new society

The new reality that must be referred to is the democratic industrial society shaped by the industrial and liberal revolution and grounded on the values of reason (fairness, justice, freedom, science); its main element is the quality of its members.

In the Eighties there has been a series of changes (advanced technological progress, computer science, growing complexity) leading to a post-industrial stage, in which the form of technological rationality seems to prevail, while the importance of politics is declining to the advantage of an outstanding self-centred attitude.

Education, society and school

Education aims at helping young people to grow up, to become able to go their own way and to decide according to their own free will, apart from any economic or political interest.

It means also education to those ideals that enable to operate within society. Education and socialization are closely related since the synthesis of individual and social good is accomplished in the personal consciousness that has been developed.

Therefore school must take on the fundamental task of fostering the progress of mankind by means of education, promoting instruction and increasing civilization.

Education to social, civic and political values

It is the specific task of school and some fundamental issues can be pointed out:

- vocational training as education to the ethical system of the world of production
- education to the observance of the law, seen as respect for the values of law and not as conventionality or passive submission
- cultural education able to develop a political conscience and awareness and to help realize the complexity of problems in order to avoid ideologic simplifications
- exclusion of any indoctrination and new possibilities of participation only on the basis of one's skills.

The basic concept is to create an actual and effective school of culture, able to provide a humanistic, scientific and technical education that may meet the economic and spiritual

needs of a democratic society moving step by step towards higher and higher targets of justice and freedom.

2. The socialist-marxist theory

Major exponents: L. Borghi, M.A. Manacorda, G.M. Bertin, A. Visalberghi, F. De Bartolomeis, A. Santoni Rugiu

It is linked to the classic marxist theory, to A. Gramsci's thought and to the tradition of progressive education.

Its core is the idea of man as an historical and social being.

Individual, society, education

These are the basic concepts:

a - The relation between the educational process and the environment is circular and interactive

b - The individual has an inner drill to live, which results in an operative skill, an open attitude to experiences and a tendency to autonomy. Consequently, the development of an individual doesn't mean either a passive adjustment to environmental conditioning or the result of a determined genetic heritage, but a continuous interaction between man and the world.

c- Values are not metaphysically grounded, they are derived from the world of experience and develop according to the historical and scientific progress of man, growing in relation to his ability to control nature. Values are meanings within experience.

d - Social education is the very ground of education as synthetic experience, since the ideas of personality and of

sociality seem to be practically the same, being sociality the highest development of personality in a moral sense.

e - Education is a process of dynamic adaptation to social reality, in which the values that improve the quality of experience (respect, solidarity, tolerance, sympathy, etc.) must gradually be pursued. This process includes also the development of self-judgement and participation, which strengthen personal power against ethical conventionality and political opportunism, thus ensuring a true moral commitment of each individual to the others.

f - Civic education is grounded on open-mindedness and social commitment and aims at educating citizens to co-operate in their community.

g - Political education completes civic education; it is seen as historical, legal and economic preparation and as education to self-judgement, dialogue and confrontation.

Education and democracy

There can't be a new education without a democratic society and similarly, a democratic society can't be implemented without an education able to foster actual equality of the individuals.

Education to democracy must be pursued by means of actual experiences so as to develop the sense of social commitment and participation. School must therefore foster reasonableness, tolerance, solidarity, mutual devotion, self-sufficiency, resistance to herd instinct, sense of belonging, respect for different opinions, understanding and appreciation of plurality and difference, love of dialogue.

Moreover, the school itself has to develop the characteristic of a democratic organization, giving up its authoritarian and burocratic structure so as to become an institution ready to accept different contributions, open to both tradition and change, contrary to any form of dogmatism and autonomous in its work.

A continuous exchange between school and community is needed in order to fulfil education in close relation to the development of all the forms of social progress (family, means of social communication, etc.).

Therefore, participation of the families and of the students to school life and management must become more and more active.

The leading concept is the need for a thorough democratizing process involving all aspects of education and schooling, in order to assert the principle of lifelong education as any citizen's right and suggest the idea of an educating society as solution to the problem of the relation between school and environment.

3. The catholic theory

Major exponents: G. Corallo, P. Braido, A. Agazzi, G. Flores D'Arcais, G. Catalfamo, C. Perucci

This theory aims at sinthesizing the ideas of classical philosophies with the christian-catholic thought. Its core is the principle of the human being, considered as the ground and reference of values.

Individual and society

As substantial and rational essence, the human being is the

highest value of all existing things and the subject of inalienable rights. It's the human being that originates society and not the reverse, thus social organization can't clash with the instances of freedom that are characteristic of the inner self of the person.

The human being is essentially social and political, but sociality and politics do not represent its only destiny.

It's nevertheless true that man can't be separated from the social and political context, which should respect and promote individual freedom according to an ideal of democracy seen as a system of human, social and political relations that must ensure anyone's freedom and respect for individuality.

Education to social, civic and political values

Sociality, that is, openness to the others, must be oriented and directed (educated) so as to ground it on true moral and religious values, which can be synthesized in the principle of respect for the others. Education to sociality means education to become able to start interpersonal relations grounded on the idea of respect for the dignity and the value of the human being.

Civic education is fundamentally concerned with the relation between the individual and state, its matters being all the rights and duties regarding the laws and institutions regulating social life. It is closely related to moral education (education to realize and achieve the values of good, peace and justice) and to the development of the awareness of the values of reason and natural law (openness to the universal and spiritual aspects of society); consequently, it can't be limited to education

to and compliance with positive rules, it must be an active interiorization of the values that justify actions (that is, rules).

Political education means to become able to realize and pursue the common good through coexistence and participation; in the first place it has to match and synthesize elements of intellectual nature (understanding), ethical nature (evaluating) and operational nature (doing). Some precise goals of personal development can be pointed out:

- education to an historical consciousness
- education to the ability of being acquainted with and understanding the political problems of society in a critical way
- education to an active and productive involvement
- education to willing and unselfish help
- education to ethical strictness
- acquisition of the necessary technical knowledge.

The task of educating to social, civic and political values lies firstly with the family (where the basic knowledge is acquired through vital involvement), then with the school and finally with social groupings (e.g. young people associations and groups), where life opportunities for the human being are pursued.

Education and democracy

Democracy is the system of social and political organization that can best ensure defence of and respect for the issues of dignity and freedom of the human being.

Its fundamental character is pluralism, both of ideas and

of institutions, which doesn't mean indifference to mistakes but regard for other people's ideas and openness to communication.

The foremost condition on which democracy can be supported is educating to realize one's principles, to testify, respect and defend them, being at the same time aware that they are within the transcending boundary of truth, where other principles can be found as well.

Consequently, the basic elements are tolerance and dialogue, means of confrontation and mutual respect, that is, of care for the human being.

Secondly, democratic education has always been education to peace and to non-violent attitude. Finally, it is evident that school must take on particularly relevant tasks resulting in specific responsibilities:

- to be a place of ethical improvement
- to be a place where ideas are spread and worked out
- to be a place of education to critical thought
- to be a place of co-operation with families and other social realities
- to be a place of steady and actual interaction with society.

4. The radical theory

Major exponent: A. Capitini

On the basis of a fundamentally religious, even if laic concept of life, this theory means to regard the essential principles and values (pacifism, nonviolence, tolerance, etc.) as the starting point for an action of actual change of social structures.

Education, society, school

Being the synthesis of moral, social and political values, civic education identifies with the development of a civic conscience considered as education to participation to the needs and problems of social life, to the acquisition of correct information and to the organization of widespread support and approval of actions of change and reform.

Such education, which is mainly up to school, can't be limited only to the transmission of contents, it must also provide particular experiences and practice, such as intervention and participation of schools to the life of the surrounding community, visits to institutes, associations, meetings, law courts, trade-unions, etc.

It's important to realize that finalized methods are needed:
- organizing the school as a collective and democratic community
- fostering group work for projects, surveys and inquiries
- using dialogue and communication for all subjects
- using interschool correspondence, travels and exchange of students.

Particular stress is laid on the teaching of history, with special regard for the study of the contemporary period and of the struggle for legal, social and cultural rights.

It is necessary to encourage the study of the lives of the people who suffered for freedom and for the progress of mankind.

The basic concept is education to militancy as critical knowledge of political events through open and balanced confrontation and a realistic analysis of facts, opinions and alternatives,in order to lay the foundations of a politically active conscience that is necessary to play a definite rôle in decisions.